

My name is Kathy Fink. I am from Augusta, a small town 80 miles from Helena. This is my son Shay. He has autism and is non-verbal. He is very smart in his own right. Shay has a twin brother, Shilo. When my two boys graduate High School this year, Shilo is off to college and Shay ^{will be} ~~is~~ going "nowhere."

In my naive mind, I thought there would be a nice, happy residential home for Shay. A place for him to flourish and be with peers. The more I checked out homes, I found most of them quite nice with wonderful activities to keep Shays mind sharp. Then I found out the waiting lists were 5 to 20 years long. Not enough staff to help another special person. Not enough funds to help another special person.

If I had the money I wouldn't need this assistance. I'm a single mother living paycheck to paycheck. I do get a little state assistance at the moment, but when Shay turns 18, all assistance stops.

I would like to know how I am going to work full-time and still take care of my son. There are day programs and residential homes, in Choteau, 20 miles from Augusta, but because of ~~the~~^{ongoing} staffing problems this to is a dead end.

I am asking for your help, to help my son and other special adults.

You have been generous in the past, please be generous now, and increase funding for direct care services. So my son has a future.

Thank you.